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P&P Officer French Receives Prestigious Award from DE National Guard

The Delaware National Guard annually honors two of its enlisted leaders with the Col. S.B.I. Duncan Leadership Award, and on Sunday, February 8, Army Staff Sgt. John French, who is a DOC Probation & Parole Officer, was named one of the recipients for training year 2008.

French, a military policeman with the Delaware National Guard's 153rd Military Police Company, deployed to Iraq in June 2007 and returned June 2008. While deployed, he was responsible for training the "Sons of Iraq," a community militia, and later spearheaded the security planning and oversight for the largest Iraqi police recruiting drive held in the Arab Jabour area. During this drive more than 2,000 Iraqi civilians safely applied for police officer positions. French accomplished these projects in addition to completing more than 100 combat missions with the Military Police Company as an acting platoon sergeant. For his actions he was awarded the Bronze Star.

Since joining the Delaware National Guard in 1999, French has deployed to Saudi Arabia (2002-2003), Mississippi in 2005 to support efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and the 2007-2008 deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.



Maj. Gen. Frank Vavala pins the Delaware Distinguished Service Medal onto Army Staff Sgt. John French, 153rd Military Police Company. (Photo by Lt Col Len Gratteri)

"I have served side-by-side with my brothers and sisters of the 153rd Military Police helping to bring hope to people suffering after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina and trying to rebuild people's lives in a war-torn Iraq," said French as he received the leadership award. "I have always strived to exemplify the Army values and Col. Duncan, I hope, would be proud of the Soldiers who represent Delaware today like he did so many years ago."

About the Award - Although Col. Duncan retired as an officer, his service while an enlisted Soldier was legendary in the eyes of many. In 1908 Duncan was only 14 years old, but was helping the Delaware State Militia running errands, performing chores and setting targets on the rifle range for the Soldiers. At age 17 he enlisted in the First Delaware Infantry and during his 35-year career served eight campaigns of federal service. He served along the Mexican Border in 1916, in Europe during World War I, and in both the European and Pacific Theaters in World War II. Additionally, he served during numerous state calls to duty in Delaware.

His wife, the late Elmira Newell Duncan, established the S.B.I. Duncan Foundation in 1964 to provide an annual award to recognize the enlisted soldiers who best emulated Colonel Duncan's style of leadership.

This release utilizes text and photos from Lt Col Len Gratteri, State Public Affairs Office of the Delaware National Guard